TRUTHS TESTED BY THE WORLD WAR

BY

CLARENCE EDWARD MACARTNEY

Pastor of the Arch Street Presbyterian Church

PHILADELPHIA

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION
AND SABBATH SCHOOL WORK

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TRUTHS TESTED BY THE WORLD WAR

I

HAS THE WAR CREATED A NEW RELIGION?

One of the abominable things in the German method of warfare was to take innocent citizens, preferably women and children, and place them as a protecting shield in front of an advancing body of troops. The enemy could not fire on the German soldiers without killing their own countrymen. I feel that the American soldier is being used in such a way. When I read of all the things that the returning soldiers are going to do when they get back, how they went forth boys, but are to return as the "Day of Judgment," how they will demand a new social order, and a new industrial order, and a new university, and a new Church, I see a huge figure striding across the waves of the deep, a colossus of anger and retribution. The soldier is being exploited in the interests of many a social or industrial scheme, but the most subtle exploitation of the returning man in khaki is that which makes him a mouthpiece of rationalism and unbelief. Denial of some of the great truths of the Christian religion and ridicule of some of the others seem more formidable when they are put into the mouth of returning heroes from the slaughter pens of Europe. At least, they have the advantage of freshness. The world was growing weary

of the familiar accents of unbelief as they fell from the lips of socialists, or agitators, or professors in colleges and seminaries, or ministers in the pulpit. Some new presentation of the case against Christianity had to be made. And how better could it be made than through the returning soldier, fresh from his great campaign for righteousness? If a poll were taken of the army, very likely it would be found that the majority of the soldiers differ very little in their religious orientation from the position they held before they became soldiers. But that makes no difference. The soldier makes a fine medium for preaching what anyone to-day wishes to preach, good or bad. I admire, therefore, the skill and cunning of those who select the soldier as the voice through which they will speak to the world.

But even soldiers may err. The war, undoubtedly, has been a big thing. But has it been big enough to abrogate the charter of the Church and found a new religion? This is the question that comes to my mind as I read many of the deliverances upon the effect that the war has had on religion. If it has put the stamp of condemnation upon such beliefs as heaven, hell, salvation through the death of Christ upon the cross, if it has put a fool's cap upon Christian history, if it has demonstrated the folly of not forgetting to assemble ourselves together for public worship, if it has made it ridiculous to talk to-day about Abraham and Moses and Samuel or the apostles of the New Testament, then the war has indeed created a new religion; at least it has succeeded in destroying an old, a very old religion,

a religion that until recently men thought had done great service to humanity.

But let us be calm. It took more than a few soldiers to found the Christian religion; it will take more than the veterans of a great war to destroy it. This is not the first crisis through which the Church has passed. It has witnessed the rise and fall of many a system and many an empire. To its enemies the Church has always been moribund, and always there have been world happenings which, to their thinking, discredited the Church and promised to dismiss it in disgrace from human affairs. But for some reason the Church persisted. And in great outlines the cardinal doctrines of the Church to-day are those truths which were committed to her from the beginning. The Church has had wise teachers and great prophets, but she has had no new revelation, at least, not until recently. This fact is worth pondering over a little before one gets into a panic over the present-day assault upon Christianity and accepts at their face value the statements of lecturers, magazine writers, and occasional ministers, who tell us that the Church is already doomed and is hastening to its grave. Others, not quite so advanced, say that unless the Church does this or does that, drops this or takes on that, then the Church is doomed. Personally, I can get along without the historic retrospect, for I believe that the Church will endure because I receive the saying of Jesus: "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." But if that does not seem to be enough for a timid spirit, then let me commend to him

the contemplation of the past, how the Church has never quit, resigned, disappeared, just because there were men who said that the time for such a performance was at hand.

In times past men, in the wrath of their open unbelief, rose against the Church and said that it must go, root and branch. To-day we have something much more subtle and insidious. The plan now is to destroy Christianity under the pretext of reforming it and readapting it to the needs of the modern man and the modern mind. When we look closely into this restatement of Christianity, we discover that it is nothing less than the repeal of all the distinctive laws of that religion which we received from Christ and his apostles. In fine, it amounts to this: Christianity is no longer a religion of redemption, but only a system of education and reform, with Jesus, the "flower of the race," as our teacher and leader. The "offense of the cross" has ceased, for the cross no longer speaks to man of his condemnation and guilt and of Christ's death for his sins, but is only a symbol which recalls the beauty of the sacrificial life.

Sometimes one gets confused and discouraged by the multitude of denominations and sects and explanations of Christianity. But whenever one feels that way, it will cheer and encourage him to reflect that, after all, these accounts of Christianity divide themselves into two general classes, and that between the two classes the line of demarcation is sharply drawn. On the one side are all those accounts of Christianity,

which, with all their differences, agree in saying that it is a religion of redemption; on the other side are all those accounts of Christianity, which, whatever they teach and however they teach it, agree in this, that they leave out redemption through faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. The common and popular and historic divisions of Christianity have lost their significance. In reality, there are just two denominations, the members of which appear in all churches, a denomination which regards Christianity as a plan of redemption and a denomination which, whatever it says about Christianity, leaves out redemption. This clears the atmosphere for us.

Under the plea of a fervent desire to "save society" some religious writers and speakers to-day have gone out of their way to discount the saving of man's soul. Indeed, at a meeting of one of our largest presbyteries I heard the secretary of one of the Boards of the Presbyterian Church declare that Christ did not come "merely to save a man's miserable, little, picayune soul from hell: he came to save society." So he did, and he will save society: "every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear," and "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah." But, until society is saved, what of the units which make up society? Is it possible that while this evolution of society is going on the souls of men are perishing? When I heard this utterance about Christ and a man's "picayune soul," there came to my mind the words of Christ on the same subject, "What doth it profit a man, to gain

the whole world, and forfeit his life?" Let us do what we can to save and salt society, but let us not do so by pretending to ignore that which is the unit of society, the individual man, and the value of that man.

In these opening paragraphs, I have tried to give a plain statement and a fair statement of the complaint against historic Christianity and a reasonable account of how it is now proposed to reëdit and redeclare the message of Jesus Christ. The movement toward that reëdition and amendment of the faith of the Church has received a new impetus during the war, for the protagonists of this new religion confidently declare that the events of the war have demonstrated that the old positions of the Church are no longer tenable and that if such an amendment is not made, the Church will cease to be a factor in human society. It is my purpose to show that the real lesson of the war is the very opposite of this, and that the outstanding truths of historic Christianity have received a tremendous vindication at the hands of the war. To this task I now address myself, with particular reference to some of the doctrines of the Christian religion to which it has been the privilege of the Presbyterian Church to bear a noble and historic witness. The floods have come, the rains have descended, and the winds have fiercely blown. Let us now examine those truths associated with the Presbyterian Church and see how it fares with our house of faith after the years of storm and stress.

II

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE

In his address at the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Auburn Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church, Secretary of State Robert Lansing, prefaced his remarks by saying that he was "not only a Christian, but also a Presbyterian." What aspects of Christian faith come to mind when one hears such a saying, "Not only a Christian, but a Presbyterian"?

In popular thought, at least, the Presbyterian Church is associated with the belief in the eternal purpose of God working through men and through nations. In a somewhat more limited nomenclature it is spoken of as predestination. The Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith now appended to our hymnal thus summarizes it in Article III: "We believe that the eternal, wise, holy, and loving purpose of God embraces all events, so that while the freedom of man is not taken away nor is God the author of sin, yet in His providence He makes all things work together in the fulfillment of His sovereign design and the manifestation of His glory; wherefore, humbly acknowledging the mystery of this truth, we trust in His protecting care and set our hearts to do His will."

How has this doctrine fared during the war? Has the reaction of the war been of a nature to discredit this

belief or to reveal it in all its rugged splendor? I firmly believe the latter to be the case. On the lips of thousands of soldiers in the training camps or in the forefront of the hottest battle there are words which confess to their belief in predestination, that is, in the sense of the time for their death being appointed. "Fatalism," a friend said to me, when I spoke to him along this line. "No," I rejoined, "not fatalism, but predestination." "What is the difference?" he asked. "The difference," I answered, "is all the difference that there is between a Turk and a Presbyterian elder in America." It is easy to throw dust into the air and try to confuse fatalism with predestinationism, but "by their fruits ye shall know them." What mean these noble letters that Christian lads have written home to their parents in Scotland and England and Canada and America, telling their loved ones not to worry about them, nor greatly to grieve over them when they have "gone west," for their times are in God's hands and they yield gladly to his plan in their lives and in the life of the world? It means that the sufferings and hazards of the battle field have brought to the front again that grand old belief in the eternal purpose of God, a belief too little mentioned in the Presbyterian pulpits of the last generation, or, if mentioned at all, mentioned only that it might be held up for ridicule and as a monument to the folly and fierceness of our spiritual forbears. Into the hearts of millions of young men there has been born the faith that God has not forsaken his world and that. mysterious

as it may seem, God is the silent Architect who, back of all the dust, clamor, and confusion, is building through the free actions of men and of nations the vast structure of the future; and that as men have their day and their hour, so nations have their day and their hour. Thus, it is not an accident, but according to the eternal purpose of God, that in this crisis of the world's liberties the United States of America should rouse herself like a strong man after sleep and strike the mighty and final blow for the liberation of the nations.

III

THE STATE OF MAN'S NATURE

Another Presbyterian teaching which has been vindicated by the war is what it has held concerning the state of man's nature. Article V of the Brief Statement thus expresses it: "We believe that our first parents, being tempted, chose evil, and so fell away from God and came under the power of sin, the penalty of which is eternal death; and we confess that, by reason of this disobedience, we and all men are born with a sinful nature, that we have broken God's law, and that no man can be saved but by His grace."

There is no article in the Presbyterian creed which has aroused such fierce antagonism and evoked such a chorus of ridicule and scorn. Considering what the article teaches about the state of man, it may well be that the hatred men bear to the doctrine is one of the things that ought to commend it to thoughtful persons. The hypothesis of physical development, with its fascinating theories and interesting data, created an enthusiasm which made the doctrine of development overflow all its banks and sweep into every form of life, spiritual as well as physical. Men jumped at the conclusion that they now could solve the enigma of history, of man, of God, of sin. The chief thing that this hypothesis has accomplished as regards sin and man has been to do away with the accountability of man to God, which

Daniel Webster declared the greatest thought that had ever come into his mind, for if man is just a developing organism, then it is folly indeed to speak of responsibility and judgment and conscience.

Many have frankly admitted this and have plunged into the mire of out-and-out materialism. But within our churches there have been a great company, in the pulpit and out of it, who try to think of themselves according to both views; that is, they try to think of themselves as men created in the image of God and to him accountable, and they also try to think of themselves as superbrutes, gradually, by a process of growth, not by revelation and never by forgiveness and regeneration, getting rid of the "ape and tiger" that is in them. I call them half-clad Christians, for just as a man might throw away all his clothes but his shirt, and yet claim to be civilized and one with his neighbors, these persons throw away the things vital in the Christian creed, and yet wish to be known as Christians in their faith, and resent with anger any implication that they are not.

But while we were discussing this question of whether man was an advancing beast or a wrecked angel, a voice greater than man's began to speak. God answered man out of the whirlwind of the World War. "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" "Who is this that knows more about man than I, who made him, know?"

According to the popular theory of man's nature a great world war could never come. It was too hor-

rible; the advancing humanity of the race would prevent it. But the war did come, and its horrors covered the earth with desolation. According to the popular belief as to the state of man's nature, Germany, the heir of the ages, with great spiritual prophets and dreamers back of her, with mighty scientists applying, as in no other country, the secrets of nature to the development and education of man, Germany with her schools and laboratories and scientific state, should have given the world the highest exhibition of the greatness and beauty of the soul of man. But, alas! the very reverse has happened. It is Germany that has plunged the deepest into the darkness of cruelty and hate and sensual abomination; it is Germany, above all the nations that dwell upon the face of the earth, that has been the source of the world's present anguish and woe, with the earth covered, and the caverns of the ocean littered with the bones of the slain.

What I am trying to elucidate is this: The conduct of Germany in this war, so far as it may be taken as a study of human nature (I purposely avoid that terrible and abominable and pulpit-mauled word "psychology." Upon it be a thousand anathemas), the study of Germany, I say, certainly tends to confirm the old Presbyterian belief about the corruption of human nature, its ever-lurking possibility of reversion to the worst in moments that may seem the most favorable for virtue's reign. What we have seen upon the earth in the last four and a half years has made men see that the word "progress" does not tell the whole story about man,

and that that ridiculed tenet of Calvinism, that man is not merely a developing brute, with many brutish traits still in him, but a moral being gone astray, that his nature has suffered moral shipwreck, stands far better the fiery test of this war and its world-wide abominations.

The thing in Christianity which more than all else commended it to Robert Browning as a true revelation was this doctrine of the corruption of man's nature. In his "Gold Hair" he relates the story of the beautiful maiden so esteemed for purity of heart and heavenly conversation that she was buried inviolate, her wonderful hair coiled about her head, in the very space by the altar. Years afterwards, when the pavement was being repaired the workers came upon the crumbling coffin and the skeleton, and lo! all about the head lay pieces of gold. She who had been thought so stainless loved gold so eagerly that she took it down to the grave with her, hidden in the tresses of her luxuriant hair. And then Browning concludes:

Why I deliver this horrible verse?
  As the text of a sermon, which now I preach:
Evil or good may be better or worse
  In the human heart, but the mixture of each
Is a marvel and a curse.

The candid incline to surmise of late
  That the Christian faith proves false, I find;
For our Essays-and-Reviews' debate
  Begin to tell on the public mind,
And Colenso's words have weight:

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
  See reasons and reasons; this, to begin:
'Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart
  At the head of a lie-taught Original Sin,
The Corruption of Man's Heart.

Against that huge, popular, cunning, and gloriously decked lie, that there is no such thing as sin, the World War has launched point-blank its massive and terrible spear. It has given awful confirmation to the first lesson of Christianity, the corruption of man's heart.

IV

THE JUSTICE OF GOD

The name "Presbyterian" always suggests something about the justice of God. In another paragraph and under the discussion of the atonement I shall speak of the justice of God as we see its demonstration in the cross of Christ, how thereby God remained just and yet the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. In this paragraph, I am thinking of the justice of God as it has been manifested in the punishments and losses of the war, retributive justice. The Presbyterian Church has always tried to honor that attribute of God, his justice. Matthew Arnold spoke of "the enduring power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness." But the one word, God, will do for a Presbyterian. There is such a thing in the world as the justice of God. What is unjust in men and in nations is inevitably referred to the justice of God, who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil."

The World War has mightily vindicated a faith which has centered about the justice of God. It is because men have believed that there is such a law working in the universe that they have had the faith and the courage to stand and defy the Prussian Beast, rising, like the beast of the Apocalypse, out of the sea, to make war on man and God. It is because of their confidence that the order of this world is a moral order that men

have died that what was wicked and unjust might be laid in the dust.

It is interesting to turn back to another great crisis in human history—but with France and Germany, or at least Prussia, playing different rôles from those which they play to-day—and see how liberty-loving and justice-loving men in the Napoleonic period looked upon France and Napoleon in much the same way in which we now regard Germany and its kaiser. In the Napoleonic period, too, men looked for the downfall of Napoleon because they believed in the moral order, that a God of justice was in the heavens. One of the noblest expressions of this faith I find in a letter written in 1818 by the Prussian Queen Luise from Königsberg to her father: "It were a crime to say, God is with the French emperor; but he is manifestly an instrument in the hands of the Almighty to bury out of sight the old order, which has no further purpose. I do not believe that the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte is firm and secure on what at present is so dazzling a throne. Only truth and justice are steadfast and at rest; he is politic, that is, cunning, and he guides himself, not according to the eternal laws, but according to circumstances as they are just now. Consequently, he stains his rule with much injustice. I believe steadfastly in God, and therefore also in a moral ordering of the world. This I do not see in the reign of violence, and so I entertain the hope that better days will succeed the present evil ones."

"What are all our histories," said Cromwell, that rod

in the Almighty's hands, "but God manifesting himself that he hath shaken and tumbled down and trampled underfoot whatsoever he hath not planted?"

In our anxiety for the future and with something of a feeling of disillusionment after the idealism of the War, as we discover that human nature has not been regenerated and the long warfare between good and evil, the light and the darkness, is still engaging our strength and our loyalty, let us not forget the mighty thing that God has done in the earth. When the German divisions were smashing through the French and British lines in their last great assault, with dread in their hearts men made it their first prayer and their first desire that this wicked plot against the liberty of the world might not succeed, that Germany might be overthrown. Come what may, that prayer has been answered, and let us thank God that once again he has taught men that he is a God who knows how to bring low the mighty, and that although clouds and darkness are often about him as we seek to learn his purposes and understand his doings, "righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne."

V

FUTURE RETRIBUTION

This is not a pleasant topic, but because things are unpleasant and painful they do not therefore cease to exist. There are many things in this life that are painful and fearful, but that does not affect their reality. There is a great difference between believing in Christ and believing all that Christ taught. If by belief in Christ we mean the acceptance of all that Christ taught, then the company of Christian believers is greatly reduced. The teaching of Christ on the subject of future retribution is a touchstone of our faith: it lets us know whether we believe in Christ because what he says happens to agree with our desires and thoughts, or because the teaching comes from him.

This is the first and the last thing to say upon this solemn subject: Jesus Christ plainly, solemnly, repeatedly taught future punishment. As if God foresaw the difficulty men would have in receiving this truth, he committed its proclamation to Christ himself. The apostles may assume it, or hint at it here and there; but it is not to John or Paul or Peter that we go for light on this subject, but to Christ himself. It was from those lips that were bathed in mercy and pity that there came the terrific teaching about the judgment to come, the never-quenched fire, the never-dying worm. The man who told the story of the Lost Sheep

and the Good Samaritan was he who told the story of the Rich Man in the torments of hell. Through all the teaching of Christ we hear the note of warning, like the heavy reverberation of the sea as its waves break upon the distant shore.

Many are the paths which men have taken to avoid this part of the gospel. Some deny it by denying the spiritual nature of man and life after death. Universalists and Second-Probationists agree in a general restoration of all men. There may be retribution, but not eternal. Annihilationists get rid of the difficulty by having the wicked destroyed, literally, body and soul. It was this teaching that gave Pastor Russell such a following. A man had arisen who could get rid of hell. A fourth group, and the most consistent, say frankly that Christ did teach retribution, but they reject it because it is not consistent with God's love and justice. Christ taught it, but Christ was mistaken.

It does not come within the compass of this chapter to defend the doctrine of future retribution, except to say that the sentence pronounced upon sin is eternal death. In that event, the great remedy, the death of Christ on the cross, is in proportion to the punishment and the disease; but if it is something less than eternal death, then the remedy was too great and Christ too precious a gift. During the war there was no word that appeared so frequently in the magazine articles, in the dinner-table discussions, in the public lectures, and in the letters from the soldiers at the front as the word "hell." However lightly employed, the constant

use of that word gave proof that in the Christian teaching of hell there is that which responds to the deep intuitions of man's heart; and when the offense has been sufficiently heinous man falls back upon this idea to express his conviction and his abhorrence and his demand for judgment. Academic theories fall from him in the stress of moral indignation, that great cleanser of the theological glass. Give him an offense terrible enough, and hell does not trouble man; he demands it. That is the point: we may not think it, but Christianity plainly declares that man's sin, not a certain German's sin, but man's sin, is heinous, and that man is under the extreme penalty; therefore the intervening love of God in Christ; therefore the incarnation and the atonement. Men are not condemned because they reject Christ. Men are already under condemnation, but from that condemnation they are rescued when they accept the overtures of divine mercy in Christ.

VI

SATAN AND MALIGN SPIRITS

In H. G. Wells's book, "Joan and Peter," the godfather Oswald is telling what he will do for young Peter. He vows that he will give him a good education in the classics and mathematics, and that "he shall renounce the devil and all his works. But there isn't any devil nowadays." But what about the war? As with the doctrine of future retribution, so with the Christian teaching as to Satan, it is Christ who is our chief authority. In metaphorical language, when he heard of the works done by the Seventy whom he had sent forth, he saluted the future victory of the Church by exclaiming, "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven!" An ingenious theory has been devised to rid the Christian's creed of any belief in Satan or satanic powers by saying that Jesus, when he began to preach, found the people believing in devils and accommodated his teaching to their point of view, making use of the superstition to enforce his own great lessons. But if that was so, then the Christ that many of us have loved and revered and trusted is gone. We must take our choice: an infallible Teacher and divine Saviour and the doctrine of satanic powers, or no Satan, no satanic powers, and a fallible teacher, a human leader. There is no logical standing ground between the two positions. As for its being inconsistent with the good-

ness and the love of God that he should permit such evil and wicked beings to exist, the same would apply to his permitting to exist evil and wicked men. And who can question that he does that? Yet men have continued to believe in God, both in his love and in his justice.

Henry Ward Beecher, regarded in his day and even now as a "liberal" theologian, in a sermon on the subject of malign spirits has this to say: "There is a power of temptation in evil spirits: if that is not taught in the Word of God, nothing is taught. If it be not taught that there is a master spirit of evil, and that there be many minor spirits, then it is not taught that there is a master spirit of good and angels many. A like interpretation would take out of the Bible anything and everything, and destroy all confidence in it as a book of direction, as a book for divine guidance."

This belief in Satan and a kingdom of fallen spirits does raise difficulties, but it solves far more than it raises. It explains temptation. The Greek of The Lord's Prayer is, "Deliver us from the evil one." It explains the inveteracy and the malignity and persistency of evil in the world; how it is that evil, driven out of one system, or one nation, or one age, swiftly reincarnates itself in some new system. In "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," the Russian thinker calms the enthusiasm of his companion, who sees in the overthrow of Germany the destruction of evil, by saying: "No, the beast does not die. It is the eternal companion of man. It hides spouting blood, forty,

sixty, a hundred years, but eventually it reappears." This belief alone explains why the beast of evil reappears.

It explains, too, the awful perversion of the natural appetites and the sins of the sex region of mankind, what is called in Revelation the "deep things of Satan." It explains how good institutions, government, commerce, universities, religion itself, are ever being corrupted and poisoned. It explains the foolish and fantastic and grotesque perversions of the Christian religion under the name of Christian Science, Spiritualism, and the like. It explains my own besetting sins, how they fit themselves to my disposition and pursue me with the patience and attack me with the skill of a most subtle personality.

After "hell" the most frequently employed words in war literature have been the words, "devilish," hellish," "demoniacal," and they who have tried to give an account of the enormities of the German soldiery and sailors have described them as the expression of more than human malice and wickedness. Not only have the deeds been cruel, but the whole damnable plot and plan was wicked and cruel beyond the compass of human experience; the pride and ambition that launched the war was satanic, like unto that of the angels "that kept not their own principality," but rebelled against God. This is exactly what the war has been: rebellion against the Most High God. Let us thank God that, although Satan can do fearful injury, his power to harm is limited; also his day.

VII

THE ATONEMENT

If I were asked to state in a single sentence the deepest meaning of Christianity my answer would be the great sentence of Paul: "I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me." There are many other things that are splendidly true of the Christian religion, but any definition of it that leaves out the fact referred to by the apostle in that fragment from his letter to the Galatians, that the Son of God loved man and died for him, and that by faith in that sacrifice man lives forever, fails to do justice to Christianity. It has left unsaid the great thing.

The effort that is being made to dislodge this central truth of our most holy faith, the atonement, is nothing new or strange in Christian history. Subtle and persistent have been the attempts to divest Christianity of its "dyed garments from Bozrah" and present it to men as a plan for overcoming the tyrannies and injustices of the social and political world, or as a handbook of rules for daily conduct and not a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and bring men back to God. The sweep and penetration of this movement, which is as old as the gospel itself, may be judged from the fact that at a recent gathering of Presbyterian ministers in a great Presbyterian center I heard the guest for the

day, a well-known rector of the Episcopal Church, read a paper in which he seriously asked the question if the time had not come for the Church to omit from its language and services all those phrases in the Bible which refer to the death of Christ as a sacrifice to satisfy the justice of Almighty God. The stock argument employed by those who write and speak thus was used by this speaker when he referred to the parable of the Prodigal Son, declaring that when the wanderer was received and forgiven by his father nothing was said about an atonement or satisfaction of justice.

Dr. Chalmers was very partial to the expression, "The great peculiarities of Christianity." The outstanding peculiarity of Christianity is its doctrine of the vicarious death of the Son of God for the sins of the world. In writing to the Corinthians and reminding them of what he had preached to them, Paul said, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." The fact that Christ died for our sins was the first and most important fact in the Christian teaching that Paul had received and which he declared with such enthusiasm throughout the world. What he put "first of all" is now put last of all, or left out altogether, by many public teachers of the Christian religion. We are told that we are not to believe on Christ, but like Christ; that he died merely to teach us how to die to sin; that he died to lead us, to inspire us, to influence us. All this is very different from saying that he died for our sins and that we must believe

on him. The difference is far greater than one would infer from hearing or reading some of the very able and ofttimes stirring presentations of the claims of Christ which are silent as to his atoning death. The difference is so great as to mean nothing less than a repudiation of historic Christianity and the establishment of a new faith.

What then has the war to say about the atonement? Is it a voice of approval or repudiation that we hear calling to us from those fields of carnage and from the graves of the innumerable dead? The war has indeed shaken down many things which we thought were established forever. Has the Rock of Ages, too, been shaken and dislodged? Has the cross, for so many centuries "towering o'er the wrecks of time," at length gone down with a crash and joined the company of those things and systems which were and are not?

In hearing witnesses on this matter we must be careful to distinguish between those who, before the war broke upon the world, had ceased to declare "first of all" that Christ died for our sins, and those who did believe that this is the great thing in Christianity. It is not strange that men belonging to the former class should have made use of the war to discredit the atonement and should have exploited its tragedies to uphold their own views. In a recent issue of the Atlantic Monthly a well-known Baptist clergyman, who is filling the pulpit of a Presbyterian Church, has this to say about the war and the salvation of a man's soul:

"Many a soul is being saved there [in France]. Many men returning, will bless America with a heft and range of character that they did not have before. But they did not go to France to save their souls. They forgot themselves, and went to France to save the world. They are learning that innermost salvation that never comes except through social sacrifice: they have found their lives by losing them in a cause. In the midst of them one feels furiously the selfishness with which the churches often angle after men."

Certainly there is nothing hesitating or obscure in an utterance like this; and the friends of Christian truth may thank the war for this at least, that men who feel with the writer quoted above have come out boldly into the open, have ceased to say that they mean the same thing as other men, but have a different way of stating what they mean, and now declare plainly that they mean something altogether different. The author of the widely read and much discussed article from which I quote says nothing less than this, "Innermost salvation never comes except through social sacrifice." To me that is the high-water mark of the flood of rationalism that has been sweeping through the Church in recent years. According to this, Christ might have died to set the world an example of social sacrifice, but he did not die to procure righteousness for man. Man can do that himself; he can provide his own atonement, and thus frustrate the grace of God, "for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought." If we can save ourselves on the battle fields of France,

or elsewhere, then it did not behoove Christ to "suffer these things."

The one comforting recollection that comes to him who reads such a repudiation of the atonement is the reflection that this idea was not born during the war: the authors held it before the war began, but they have seized upon the war as a platform from which to declare their belief, and if they can find any unsuspecting soldier uttering similar thoughts they eagerly appropriate the speech of such a one to their purpose. For instance, one of the boys of my own congregation, in a letter in which he described the trials and hardships and dangers of battle through which he had passed. said that he believed what he had gone through "atoned sufficiently for any of the misdeeds of his past life." But it did not occur to me that it was necessary to recast Christianity because this boy, or a hundred thousand like him, talked in such a vein; for Christianity, though by experience we test its truths, is not something that we accidentally stumble upon and discover for ourselves upon the battle field or anywhere else; it is something that we have received from Christ, and from his disciples authorized to speak for him.

Suppose all the returning soldiers were to utter a repudiation of Christian truth? What of it? Are we to take the sentiments and experiences of these raw youths as our authority on the meaning of the Christian religion? Nothing could be more preposterous. But the truth probably is that soldiers who went into the war with a faith which was summed up in the

words, he "loved me, and gave himself up for me," are returning in the same faith, and with a much stronger adherence to it; if they did not return, it was in that faith that they died. Soldiers who had no faith, who cared for none of these things, are probably coming back much the same as they went over. The idea that the boys who went "over there" as soldiers to die for liberty are all returning as theologians, either to establish a new doctrine or to confirm an old doctrine, is far, very far, from the truth. Yet from the reading of such articles as that from which I have taken the above excerpt one would get the impression that this is the case. All that is necessary to correct the impression is to put on the brake of common sense.

Article VIII of the Brief Statement thus declares the belief of the Presbyterian Church concerning the atonement of Christ: "For us He fulfilled all righteousness and satisfied eternal justice, offering Himself a perfect sacrifice upon the cross to take away the sin of the world." Perhaps there has never been a time in Christian history when the word "sacrifice" was so often upon men's lips, and never a time when it was so loosely employed and so little related to him who is the great and sufficient Sacrifice. Even the word "vicarious," meaning "for another," has been so misused that it has almost lost its significance, and if we would retain the peculiar and unique thing in the death of Christ we must use the word "substitutionary."

The Mohammedan is taught, I am told, that when he dies upon the field of battle fighting against the ene-

mies of Islam he wins thereby his salvation and the harems of heaven. But how does that teaching differ from what has been either openly asserted or carefully intimated by Christian writers and speakers, that our men by fighting or falling in battle have thereby saved their souls? The sacrifice of self is a great and glorious thing. No man, I imagine, can read through the last pages of Charles Dickens' "Tale of Two Cities," where Sydney Carton, disguised as Charles Darnay, mounts the guillotine to die for his friend, without a rapid beating of the heart and perhaps a moistening of the eye, and without feeling the eternal truth of the words of Jesus, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." In a noble sense the men who gave their lives in this war have died for us. But the social and political benefits that issue from the soldier's death are not to be confused with those religious benefits which come to a man from the death of Christ on the cross.

The capacity for self-surrender may exist without regard to the nature of the man who gives his life or the cause for which he gives it. As Dr. Cadman finely says: "Good souls have no monopoly of that fine spirit. Agents of diabolism who disown morals as we accept them know how to offer their last measure of devotion for causes accursed by heaven and earth." The war was indeed a conflict between the forces of light and of darkness, but when it comes to achieving one's own salvation through the sacrifice of self, how much difference is there between the American boy who fell in the

battle and the German lad who had been so led to believe that he was fighting to save his fatherland from invasion, and gave his life therefor? If you were the judge when these souls appeared before you, what would be the difference in the standing you gave them, so far as that standing had anything to do with the laying down of their own lives in battle? Not much, I warrant. This I say to show how careful we must be when we speak of the sacrifice of a man in connection with the eternal salvation of the soul. The moment you grant that the most heroic death of the purest soldier on the battle field of the loftiest cause makes satisfaction for his sin and satisfies the demands of God, Christianity is gone, and Christ as the only Redeemer is gone. It may be a better religion that has been discovered; it may be a more reasonable religion; but it is not the Christian religion, not the religion of a man who says, "I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me."

It is only in the minds of men who have lost their grip upon the cross that the events of the Great War have dislodged the atonement from that primacy which it has had from the beginning. Instead of weakening the doctrine of the atonement, the war has vindicated it. If, as we all believe, the cause of human liberty and justice has been advanced by the sufferings of the men who fought and died on the high places of this Armageddon; if their blood is to be the seed of a new and a better era of good will and peace; if man through

death has been able to help his fellow man and through suffering bless the nations, why should it be thought a strange thing that through the sufferings and the death, not of men, but the eternal Son of God, it has pleased God to bestow upon man, not some temporal benefit, but the gift of eternal life?

"Deep calleth unto deep." The sufferings of humanity to-day have prepared the way for the proclamation of the cross. A suffering world understands a suffering Redeemer. A wounded world notes the wounds in his hands. Things that are shaken have been removed, but only that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. The cross remains: it remains to mark the graves across the seas where sleep the heroic dead; it remains to shine like a beacon over the restless sea of man's anarchy and strife; it remains to tell men of a peace that the world cannot give, nor all its convulsions take away; it remains to point men to life everlasting and to tell a weary, bleeding world of the new heaven and the new earth, established not through human wisdom and not through human sacrifice, however noble, but by the power of the cross, when the city of love and purity and justice shall be no longer a dream but a glorious reality.

VIII

THE LAW OF GOD AND HUMAN SOCIETY

In his celebrated "Ruines," Volney describes a solitary traveler sitting in the moonlight upon a fallen column and surveying the remains of ancient Palmyra. Here stood the senate house, there the temple, yonder the palaces, here the market place. Now all is silence and desolation. He remembers that this has been the story of all cities and all kingdoms and that a like fate awaits the civilization of his own day. "Who knows," he continues, in words that perhaps suggested to Macaulay the musings of his New Zealander, "if on the banks of the Thames, the Zuyder Zee, who knows if some traveler like myself shall not one day sit on their silent ruins and weep in solitude over the ashes of their former greatness." In the midst of his reverie the phantom appears and rebukes him for complaining against heaven as if God were an arbitrary despot, throwing down kingdoms regardless of their character, and by a series of interrogations shows him that the destruction of the civilizations of the past was due to man's folly and sin.

"I will make thy grave; because thou art vile," was the sentence pronounced upon Nineveh through the prophet. That one sentence is the epitaph of the past. The history of civilization may be summed up in the lines suggested by the survey of the ruins of Rome:

"There is the moral of all human tales:
'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past;
First freedom, and then glory—when that fails—
Wealth, vice, corruption, barbarism at last;
And history, with all her volumes vast,
Hath but one page."

Referring to this law of retribution working in history, and the connection between unrighteousness and national dissolution, the historian of Rome, Mommsen, has said that this fact makes a Bible out of history; "and if she cannot any more than the Bible hinder the fool from misunderstanding and the devil from quoting her she, too, will be able to bear with and to requite them both."

To this truth our Presbyterian Church bears witness in these words: "We believe that the law of God, revealed in the Ten Commandments, and more clearly disclosed in the words of Christ, is forever established in truth and equity, so that no human work shall stand, abide except it be built on this foundation. We believe that God requires of every man to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God; and that only through this harmony with the will of God shall be fulfilled that brotherhood of man wherein the kingdom of God is to be made manifest."

What searching illumination the flames of the war have cast upon these sentences! We have seen that law fearfully vindicated before our own eyes and a mighty empire within striking distance of world dominion cast into the dust. After long schooling in the theory of forgetting God and living by bread alone—the bread of science, of military organization—Ger-

many proceeded to put her theory to practice. The consequences are before the eyes of the world.

Reflecting, then, that no human work shall stand except it be built upon the foundation of God's law, we turn with anxious eyes from the past to the future. "Watchman, what of the night?" The morning has come, but is the night coming again? The war has loosed upon the world a flood of idealism. Men have contended and died for that which is more than meat and more than raiment. The spirit has been brooding upon the chaos, and in thousands of hearts there is a yearning for a better world and a new order. But what of the morrow? I read the program of the future and find little reference to the law of God. Men are talking everywhere about the rights of man, and the rights of nations, and the rights of self-determination. But the Scriptures call the attention of man not so much to his rights as to his duties.

Man's history began with a commandment: "And Jehovah God, commanded the man." We see to-day, even after the cleansing fires of the Great War, how very reluctant mankind is to obey the commandments of God. A few leaders here and there are helpless before the backward drift of human society and its repugnance to the law of God. We do not attempt to read the future before its story is written. We cannot tell whether or not the nations have been instructed by this war so as to apply their hearts unto wisdom, or whether they will repeat the follies of yesterday and "attempt the future's portals with the past's blood-

rusted key." But this we do know: if the war has demonstrated any truth, it is the truth that human society must be brought into conformity with the revealed will of God, "and that only through this harmony with the will of God shall be fulfilled that brotherhood of man wherein the kingdom of God is to be made manifest."

I listen to the appeals in our own country in behalf of the starving and the wounded and the exiled of other lands; I cross the seas and visit the devastated fields, the silent towns and villages, the millions of graves with their rude crosses. Everywhere the voice that I hear is an echo of the prophet Jeremiah's cry, uttered in the sunset of Hebrew history, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of Jehovah."

IX

THE LIFE EVERLASTING

The Presbyterian Church used to be known as a teaching Church. In proportion as it has ceased to be a teaching Church and has tried to be an exhorting Church, or evangelistic Church (I use the word in the popular, not the Biblical sense), it has lost its ancient power. One reason why so many religious charlatans and impostors have had such vogue in recent years is that the Christian Church has kept silence about the life to come and has left that vast realm of theology to wild adventurers. Article XII, in the Brief Statement, thus gives the hope of the Presbyterian Church: "We believe that in the life to come the spirits of the just, at death made free from sin, enjoy immediate communion with God and the vision of His glory; and we confidently look for the general resurrection in the last day, when the bodies of those who sleep in Christ shall be fashioned in the likeness of the glorious body of their Lord, with whom they shall live and reign for ever." If this is indeed a part of the Christian revelation, then how strange that the Church has in recent years kept silence on the subject of life after death!

Two monks were once discussing the life to come. One insisted that it would be *taliter,* like this life; the other that it would be *aliter,* unlike it. Finally they agreed that whichever of the two died first should com-

municate with the brother left on earth. In the course of time one died and was buried. True to his pledge, he visited his brother on earth in a dream and this was his message: *"Nec taliter, nec aliter, sed totaliter aliter!*—"Not as thou thoughtest, nor as I thought, but altogether different." There will indeed be surprises for us in the life to come, but our ignorance as to the minutia of the life is no excuse for shutting our eyes to what God hath revealed.

The most neglected part of the Christian teaching as to the future is that part which deals with the resurrection of the body. Christianity does more than merely affirm the continued existence of the soul after death: it teaches the restoration and the glorification of the body. Since the day that the philosophers on Mars Hill broke up Paul's meeting, when he came to the resurrection, this subject has been the butt of ridicule and jest. "With what body do they come?" "Will the babe be a babe in heaven?" "Will the obese have to carry a load of obesity in heaven?" Paul says that the man who thus talks is a plain fool. It will be the same body, yet wherein the sameness is to exist none can tell.

All that you and I know of human life is life in a body. It is impossible for us to have any other picture in our mind. The sorrowing ones who have lost a son or a brother on the fields of France think of his body, as well as of the fine, chivalrous soul that tabernacled in the body. They wonder if the parting between soul and body was long or brief, if the body was

marred, if it rested on kindly arms when fighting the last battle. What hands consigned it to its grave? Where now does it sleep? You must make man into a new creature before you can make him forget the body and think only of the soul.

Theodore Roosevelt, shortly before his death, wrote a letter to the War Department requesting that the body of his son Quentin be permitted to lie where it had fallen, and where the foe had buried him, adding that he and the boy's mother purposed visiting the grave and erecting a simple monument. Why? Because the body is nothing? No; because the body is the only instrument through which man knows the soul to speak.

The Presbyterian Church, all churches, need a revival of faith in what Christianity teaches as to the future of the body. The sorrows and the losses of the war have awakened a new interest in the life to come. The tide that had been steadily ebbing from the shores of the other life has commenced to turn, and everywhere we can hear the deep music of its advance. Grief longs, not for a ghost, but for a man! And Christian faith promises that very man. In the resurrection the glorified body is reunited to the redeemed and purified soul. Then it is that man enters into that state which our confession describes in its noble language as one in which the soul is "made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity."

Graven on the walls of tabernacle and temple were those mysterious creatures, the cherubim, having each

the face of the ox, the lion, the eagle, and the man. So man in the resurrection will be a composite of all the powers of creation: the patient, unwearying strength of the ox; the magnificent daring of the lion; the eagle's mastery of time and space; and the sinless love and unclouded intelligence of man.

X

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Article II of the Brief Statement thus expresses the Presbyterian doctrine of the Scriptures: "We believe that God is revealed in nature, in history, and in the heart of man; that He has made gracious and clearer revelations of Himself to Men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit; and that Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. We gratefully receive the Holy Scriptures, given by inspiration, to be the faithful record of God's gracious revelations and the sure witness to Christ, as the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and life."

How does it fare with the Bible, and with the Presbyterian thought of the Bible, as containing the Word of God and the only rule to direct us how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever? In the foregoing paragraphs I have already spoken of great Biblical teachings, and how the war has vindicated them. So far as it has vindicated them it has also vindicated the Bible. It is not a question of Hittites and Jebusites, and whales, and devils entering into swine, but a question of God's justice, sovereignty, his law, the atonement for sin, future retribution—and present; the hope of the life to come. These are the truths with which the Bible deals, and what it has taught upon these sub-

jects has been vindicated by the war. When the war began men went about saying, "Where is thy God?" To-day God's mighty plan, working silently behind the upheavals and the confusions of time, holds the thought of man.

Surely the great fact that the Bible assumes, and also declares, man's need of a revelation, receives a new emphasis to-day. What are President Wilson's Fourteen Points? What are all these ideas about justice, self-determination, fraternity, peace? Whence come they? They come from the Bible, from the record of God's plan for humanity.

As Disraeli said so eloquently at Oxford concerning the French Revolution, so it might be said to-day concerning the vast upheaval that our eyes have witnessed and our ears have heard, "When the turbulence was over, when the waters had subsided, the sacred heights of Sinai and of Calvary were again revealed, and amidst the wreck of thrones, extinct nations, and abolished laws mankind tried by so many sorrows, purified by so much suffering, and wise with such unprecedented experience, bowed again before the divine truths that Omnipotence had entrusted to the custody and promulgation of a chosen people."

XI

STAND FAST!

In company with President Herrick of Girard College I rode on horseback last May through the tangled woods of the Wilderness south of the Rapidan River, where fifty-five years ago the armies of Grant and Lee marched and fought and fought and marched again. In his account of the operations one of the Union officers tells how the long-continued fighting in the thick underbrush and along the narrow forest paths had so affected the nerves of the soldiers that at the slightest sound or disturbance in the woods about them there would be a crash of musketry fire. The army of the Church of Christ is in a somewhat similar position today. The swift and overwhelming movements of the past few years, the charges that have been multiplied against the Church and all that the Church has loved and venerated, the assaults from without and the disaffection within, the cleverly stated and eagerly defended theory that the world could not know what Christianity is until the day of psychology and biology, all this has affected the nerves of the Christian soldier till he is ready to rise and discharge his musket in any direction and at any time. The need of the hour, therefore, is to stand fast. God is not in a hurry. Let his Church be calm and confident. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." The convulsions

which have shaken down things new and old have revealed the majesty of the things that cannot be shaken. After the storm, they remain. That science, commerce, international law, schools, and universities are not able to save the world is written in crimson characters across the face of the whole earth. The necessity of a divine law and a divine Redeemer has been proclaimed throughout the world by the flaming heralds of war. But the war has also demonstrated the moral anarchy of human nature and the alienation of man's will from the will of God. Therefore, let us not be discouraged nor think it a strange thing if, in delivering the timeless message of Jesus to the world—that message which received its final statement when Christ appeared unto Paul, "to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me," we discover in our own generation the ancient distaste of man's heart for such a message and such a Redeemer. Our message is neither a petrified dogmatism nor a vagrant and unstable rationalism. It is the message of Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."